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SUBJECT: NURISTAN,S GOVERNOR JAMALUDDIN: PORTRAIT OF AN ELITIST

REF: KABUL 3396

Classified By: Deputy IPA Coordinator Hoyt B. Yee, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Habitually attired in blindingly white baggy trousers and tunic, Governor Jamaluddin Badr is the very picture of the present Afghan bourgeoisie: proud of his conservative religious credentials, fascinated with modern luxuries, and focused on narrow concerns. His weaknesses as Nuristan,s governor overshadow his strengths, and his flaws mean he is a frustrating and limited partner for us. Jamaluddin is indifferent to popular concerns and unable or unwilling to confront the recent increase in insurgent activity. He is, however, educated, articulate, and free of the taint of warlord politics. The son of a traditional leader (malik), he knows Nuristan,s intricate web of tribal relationships and has the respect of religious leaders. If, as promised, Jamaluddin soon shifts more of his work time out of the isolation of the capital Parun to Nurgram district center, his proximity to the PRT will better position us to make use of his talents. And even if the 2009 presidential election results in a shuffle of governors, we know of no alternative contenders for this difficult post (reftel). END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C/NF) Jamaluddin is not yet 35 years old. By this accident of age he lacks the customary symbol of legitimacy for an Afghan leader: he is not a mujahid, and he never fought the Soviets. Instead, like many younger middle-class Afghans, he was educated in exile in Pakistan, at the Jam-i-Asadya religious school. Some Nuristanis say Jamaluddin earned his scholarship to university in Saudi Arabia through cooperation with ISI, Pakistan,s intelligence service. In any case, Jamaluddin is a Salafi, part of a movement within Sunni Islam that seeks to purge presumed corrupting cultural influences supposed to have accumulated in the faith after the death of the Prophet Mohammed. Jamaluddin strongly supports sharia law. At times, the governor seems to regard the Salafi purifying mandate as an alternative source of political legitimacy.

¶3. (C/NF) Neither Jamaluddin,s faith nor his public responsibilities interfere with his liking for luxury, however he might obtain it. German journalists recently caught the governor lounging in a foyer snacking on grapes while local leaders met inside to work on election security. The governor is fond of fancy trucks and full air-conditioning, and complains when his work in this desperately poor province deprives him of these conveniences. Local contractors tell us the governor authorizes his political allies to collect "commissions" of three to five percent from internationally-funded development projects. Still, many acknowledge Jamaluddin is less corrupt than former governor Tamim Nuristani, who

stole government and aid monies allocated to the province.

¶4. (C/NF) Nuristan faces fresh insurgent incursions and a longstanding development deficit, but Jamaluddin appears to give priority to provincial political alliances and rivalries. Taliban forces, for example, succeeded this year (unlike last year) in driving into the district center of Nuristan's Barg-e-Metal district, which borders on Pakistan. (Afghan and Coalition forces have since regained the town.) Barg-e-Metal district governor Ishmael, an old classmate and present crony of Jamaluddin, fled to Kabul two days before the Taliban attack - because, the governor's critics say, Ishmael had sold for his own profit the government weapons allocated for self-defense. The same sources say Jamaluddin paid 12,000 USD bail to free Ishmael when the central government placed him in detention after his arrival in Kabul.

¶5. (C/NF) The governor's parochial political jockeying sometimes spills over into other kinds of violence. As reported septel, Jamaluddin almost certainly fomented an August 14 demonstration at election headquarters in Parun that resulted in two deaths. The Provincial Electoral Officer says Jamaluddin was frustrated that he was unable to dictate his choices for poll workers, likely a bid to inflate the vote for incumbent President Karzai. His family's longstanding support for the Kushtozi tribe against the Kam tribe leaves him unable to affect the fighting in Kamdesh district. Meanwhile, the governor's rivals - mostly allies of former governor Tamim now disaffected with their exclusion from political spoils - are rumored to have distributed weapons

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in volatile Wama district, to paint Jamaluddin as weak.

¶6. (C/NF) Both born into the local elite and educated to disdain the ordinary faith of rural Afghans, Jamaluddin particularly dislikes the inherently democratizing effect of international development projects. In discussing the governor, Nuristanis who work in development almost always mention their conviction that Jamaluddin worked to expel the British NGO Afghan Aid from Barg-e-Metal in 2000. Members of the political movement Ummat-e-Muslima, to which Jamlauddin belongs, destroyed Afghan Aid's offices and attacked demonstration farms seen as a corrupting Western influence. When working with the PRT and USAID, the governor appears focused on opportunities for his benefit, comfort, and prestige as much as, or more than, on the needs and concerns of his communities. He also dislikes the responsibility of saying no - a skill we are working now to add to his repertoire.

¶7. (C/NF) Comment: Given the difficulty the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) had in finding a college-educated Nuristani to nominate as governor, Jamaluddin appears to stand a reasonable chance of remaining in place in any second Karzai administration. For this reason, the PRT is redoubling its ongoing efforts to bring Jamaluddin around to more constructive behavior. End Comment.

EIKENBERRY